

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 21, 40 and 58 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Please amend the remaining claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device, the method comprising the steps of:

loaning a removable digital storage media medium to a customer for storing digital image data captured by a digital image acquisition device;

receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media medium from the customer;

erasing any digital image data contained on the returned removable digital storage medium; and

maintaining information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media medium and the customer.

2. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 1, wherein the removable digital storage media medium is lent at a first rental location and received at a second rental location.

3. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the first rental location and the second rental location are the same location.

4. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the first rental location and the second rental location are different locations.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the removable digital storage media medium is associated with an identification code.

6. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the identification code associated with the removable digital storage media medium is securely stored on the removable digital storage media medium, and is not erased in said erasing step.

7. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the maintaining step further comprises assigning the identification code to the removable digital storage media medium.

8. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the maintaining step further comprises:

assigning an identification code to the customer;

associating the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of the customer when the customer is lent the removable digital storage media medium; and

disassociating the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium and the identification code of the customer when the removable digital storage media medium is received from the customer.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the maintaining step further comprises:

removing the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium from inventory of the first rental location when the removable digital storage media medium is lent by the first rental location to the customer; and

adding the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium to inventory of the second rental location when the removable digital storage device medium is received by the second rental location.

10. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 9, wherein information associated with the inventories of the first and second rental locations is stored in a data store which is accessible by any of a plurality of rental locations.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 10, wherein the maintaining step further comprises the steps of:

assigning an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations;  
associating the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media medium; and

disassociating the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media medium.

12. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 11, further comprising balancing the inventory of the first and second rental locations.

13. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 12, the balancing step further comprising the steps of:

determining a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and

transferring removable digital storage media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

14. (Original) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 13, the balancing step further comprising requesting a transfer of removable digital storage media from a first rental location by a second rental location when it is determined that the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

15. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media, the method comprising the steps of:

loaning a removable digital storage media medium to a customer for storing digital data;

receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media medium from the customer;

processing the digital data stored on the returned removable digital storage media medium, said processing step including erasure of digital data contained on the received removable digital storage medium; and

maintaining information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media medium and information associated with the customer.

16. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 15, wherein the processing step further comprises making the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media medium available to the customer.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing step further comprises the steps of:

transferring the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer to another digital storage media medium; and providing the other digital storage media medium containing the transferred data to the customer.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing step further comprises the steps of:

uploading the digital data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~  
medium received from the customer to a computer server; and  
providing the customer with access to the computer server.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing step further comprises emailing the digital data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium received from the customer to one or more email accounts specified by the customer.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 16, wherein the digital data is digital image data, and wherein the processing step further comprises printing the digital image data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium received from the customer using an image forming apparatus.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method of renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 15, wherein the processing step further comprises the step of verifying the functionality of the received removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium.

23. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media at a first rental location to a customer for storing digital image data captured by a digital image acquisition device and receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media at a second rental location from the customer, the system comprising a processing system for processing the digital image data on returned ones of said rented removable digital storage media including erasure of digital image data thereon, and a maintenance system for maintaining information associated with the rental and return of returned ones of the removable digital storage media and the customer.

24. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 23, wherein the a removable digital storage media medium is associated with an identification code.

25. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the identification code associated with the removable digital storage media medium is securely stored on the removable digital storage media medium, and is not erased by said processing system.

26. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the maintenance system further assigns the identification code to the removable digital storage media medium.

27. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the maintenance system further comprises:

an assignment system that assigns an identification code to the customer;

and

an association system that associates the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of the customer when the customer is lent the removable digital storage media medium, and disassociates the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium and the identification code of the customer when the removable digital storage media medium is received from the customer.

28. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 23, wherein the maintenance system further comprises an inventory system that removes the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium from inventory of the first rental location when the removable digital storage media medium is lent by the first rental location to the customer and adds the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium to inventory of the second rental location when the removable digital storage device medium is received by the second rental location.

29. (Original) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 28, wherein information associated with the inventories of the first and

second rental locations is stored in a data store which is accessible by any of a plurality of rental locations.

30. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 29, wherein the maintenance system further comprises:

an assignment system that assigns an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations; and

an association system that associates the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media medium and disassociates the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media medium.

31. (Original) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 30, further comprising a balancing system for balancing the inventory of the first and second rental locations.

32. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 31, wherein the balancing system further comprising:

a determination system that determines a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and

a transferring system that transfers removable digital storage media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

33. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 32, wherein the balancing system further comprising a requesting system for requesting a transfer of removable digital storage media from a first rental location by a second rental location when it is determined that the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

34. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media to a customer for storing digital data and receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media from the customer, the system comprising:

a processing system that processes the digital data stored on the returned ones of said rental removable digital storage media including erasure of digital data thereon; and

a maintenance system that maintains information associated with the loan and return of returned ones of the removable digital storage media and information associated with the customer.

35. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 34, wherein the processing system further comprises a producing system for making the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media medium available to the customer.

36. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing system further comprises:

a transfer system that transfers the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer to another digital storage media medium; and

a provision system that provides the other digital storage media medium containing the transferred data to the customer.

37. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing system further comprises:

an upload system that uploads the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer to a computer server; and

a provision system that provides the customer with access to the computer server.

38. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media for use in a ~~digital image acquisition device~~ according to Claim 35, wherein the processing system further comprises an email system that emails the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer to one or more email accounts specified by the customer.

39. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media for use in a ~~digital image acquisition device~~ according to Claim 35, wherein the digital data is digital image data, and wherein the processing system further comprises a print system that prints the digital image data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Currently Amended) A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 34, wherein the processing system further comprises a verification system that verifies the functionality of the received removable digital storage media medium.

42. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-executable process steps to rent effect rental of a removable digital storage media medium to a customer for storing digital image data

captured by a digital image acquisition device and to receive, upon return, the removable digital storage media medium from the customer, the computer-executable process steps comprising code to erase any digital image data contained on the returned removable digital storage medium, and code to maintain information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media medium and the customer.

43. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 42, wherein the removable digital storage media medium is associated with an identification code.

44. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 43, wherein the identification code associated with the removable digital storage media medium is securely stored on the removable digital storage media medium and is not erased by said erasure code.

45. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 43, wherein the code to maintain further comprises code to assign an identification code to the removable digital storage media medium.

46. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 43, the code to maintain further comprising:  
code to assign an identification code to the customer;

code to associate the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of the customer when the customer is lent the removable digital storage media medium; and

code to disassociate the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium and the identification code of the customer when the removable digital storage media medium is received from the customer.

47. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 46, the code to maintain further comprising:

code to remove the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium from inventory of a first rental location when the removable digital storage media medium is lent by the first rental location to the customer; and

code to add the identification code of the removable digital storage media medium to inventory of a second rental location when the removable digital storage device medium is received by the second rental location.

48. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 47, the code to maintain further comprising:

code to assign an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations;

code to associate the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media medium; and

code to disassociate the identification code of a removable digital storage media medium from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media medium.

49. (Original) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 48, the code to maintain further comprising code to balance the inventory of the first and second rental locations.

50. (Original) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 49, the code to balance further comprising:

code to determine a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and

code to transfer removable digital storage media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

51. (Original) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 50, the code to maintain further comprising code to request a transfer of removable digital

storage media from a first rental location by a second rental location when it is determined that the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

52. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-executable process steps to rent effect rental of a removable digital storage media medium to a customer for storing digital data and to receive, upon return, the removable digital storage media medium from the customer, the computer-executable process steps comprising:

code to process the digital data stored on the returned removable digital storage media medium including erasure of digital data thereon; and

code to maintain information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media medium and information associated with the customer.

53. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 52, wherein the code to process further comprises code to make the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media medium available to the customer.

54. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises:

code to transfer the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media medium received from the customer to another digital storage media medium; and

code to provide the other digital storage ~~media~~ medium containing the transferred data to the customer.

55. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises:

code to upload the digital data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium received from the customer to a computer server; and  
code to provide the customer with access to the computer server.

56. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises code to email the digital data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium received from the customer to one or more email accounts specified by the customer.

57. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the digital data is digital image data, and wherein the code to process further comprises code to print the digital image data contained on the removable digital storage ~~media~~ medium received from the customer.

58. (Cancelled)

59. (Currently Amended) Computer-executable process steps according to  
Claim 52, wherein the code to process further comprises code to verify the functionality of  
the received removable digital storage media medium.